

Dukakis defeat biggest story in U.S. election

by Kathleen Klenetsky

One year ago, it would have seemed impossible that George Bush could be elected President of the United States. A slew of factors, ranging from Bush's involvement in the Iran-Contra scandal, his "wimp" image, the threat of a major financial blowout, and generalized dissatisfaction with the direction of economic and strategic policy during the second Reagan administration, combined to make the vice president appear unelectable.

Until Bush won the New Hampshire primary, thanks in large part to the efforts of Gov. John Sununu, conventional wisdom held that Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole would almost certainly become the Republican presidential candidate.

Bush's prospects looked so grim that, in March, Henry Kissinger half-jokingly suggested that the 1988 election campaign would unfold this way: "Bush [will be] the Republican candidate; the Democrats can't come up with one of their own. It's a one-candidate election. Bush loses."

But ultimately, Bush triumphed—and by a respectable margin. In the Nov. 8 general election, he won 40 states to Mike Dukakis's 10, garnering 426 electoral votes to his opponent's 112. His popular vote margin was 54-46, and he not only swept the South and Mountain states, but also took several of the major industrial states, including Pennsylvania and Ohio, as well as hotly contested California.

As 1988 evolved, Bush became the rallying point for factions of the establishment, especially the military and intelligence communities, that were not quite as starry-eyed about Mikhail Gorbachov's intentions as the Dukakis camp, and that wanted to ensure that the United States had a President who would not junk American military capabilities.

However, as the low voter turnout (the lowest in 40 years) underscores, Bush's victory was due much less to any popular outpouring for him and his program, than to a visceral reaction against his Democratic opponent.

Bush's triumph can be largely credited to the fact that, yet again, the Democratic Party chose as its presidential standard-bearer an individual completely out of tune with the American electorate. Dukakis, the three-term governor of Massachusetts, bore all the hallmarks of Democratic ultraliberalism that had doomed the party's candidates—with the exception of Jimmy Carter—since 1968.

Dukakis was pro-gay rights and even pro-bestiality. His record on defense issues was abysmal: He wanted to dismantle the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), stop the MX missile, and help "reformist" Mikhail Gorbachov. He even promoted satanism, making avowed witch Laurie Cabot the Official Witch of Salem, Massachusetts.

Furthermore, his economic policy prescriptions were modeled on Italian Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini's corporatism. His vaunted "Massachusetts miracle" turned out to be based on a speculative real estate market combined with a devastating decline in the state's industrial base, the results of which, primarily a shrinking tax base, led to a major budget crisis that began to erupt in June. During the last six months of the election campaign, the Dukakis camp resorted to an orgy of short-term borrowing and draconian budget cuts, in an attempt to contain the state budget crisis, at least until after the presidential election.

There were several reasons why, despite his numerous weaknesses, Dukakis was selected as his party's presidential nominee.

For one, he enjoyed the backing of a powerful segment of the Democratic Party establishment, based primarily in the Boston Brahmin-Harvard nexus, and overlapping with Republican networks centered on former Justice Department honcho William Weld. To this faction, Dukakis represented a handy vehicle for reviving the Jimmy Carter experiment in liberal fascism. Dukakis, it was believed, would be capable of imposing an International Monetary Fund-style dictator-

ship on the U.S. economy, as explicitly outlined by one of his top advisers, Ted Sorensen.

A second reason was that Dukakis had little competition. The appellation "seven dwarfs" that was applied to the Democratic field was no journalistic excess. It was absolutely on target.

Thirdly, other individuals who might have given Bush more of a run for his money, for example, Sen. Bill Bradley, declined to run, for the reasons publicly stated by another possible Democratic candidate, Chrysler chairman Lee Iacocca, in late 1986: The U.S. economy is headed for a financial collapse. Why not let a Republican become the new Herbert Hoover, and let the Democrats pick up the pieces come 1992?

Thus, once the party establishment tapped Dukakis, he was essentially a shoo-in. Jesse Jackson stayed in the race until the bitter end, not because there was any prospect that he could capture the nomination, but because he wanted to position himself to strike the best deal.

The one viable Democratic candidate, Lyndon H. LaRouche, was kept out of the political limelight by the tried-and-true tactics of smear and exclusion. He was kept out of the debates through connivance between the media and party officials, and his efforts to inject substantive debate on policy at the Democratic convention, were met by KGB-style thuggery.

Nevertheless, LaRouche played a key role in the election campaign. His policy statements, including a draft Democratic Party platform entitled "Mastering the Grave Crises of 1989-1992," received wide distribution at the Democratic convention and elsewhere, and his seven national television broadcasts, on such topics as the colonization of space, AIDS, and German reunification, drew an enthusiastic response. LaRouche's name was placed on the ballot in 12 states as an independent presidential candidate.

Another Eagleton

It was LaRouche and his associates who also dealt the death-blow to Dukakis's presidential hopes. The Duke had come out of the July Democratic convention with a 17-point lead over Bush, but that evaporated when the question of whether Dukakis was mentally fit to be President was raised. The National Democratic Policy Committee, a political action committee associated with LaRouche, had triggered the uproar when it circulated a leaflet at the convention which raised questions about Dukakis's emotional suitability for high office. Entitled "Is Dukakis the New Eagleton?" the leaflet cited evidence in two generally favorable Dukakis biographies indicating that he had a personal and family history of mental breakdown, which could prevent him from fulfilling his responsibilities as President.

The floodgates on the Dukakis mental health flap really opened on Aug. 1, when President Reagan, in response to a question from *EIR* reporter Nicholas Benton on the Dukakis

issue, commented with a smile, "Look, I don't want to pick on an invalid."

Within days, the 17-point lead which Dukakis held over Bush coming out of the Democratic convention collapsed. Even after the press began screaming that the mental health issue was a "LaRouche dirty trick," the charge stuck: It was clear from Dukakis's behavior, that he was unstable. In both pre- and post-election analyses, Dukakis aides and the media blamed the mental-health brouhaha for wrecking Dukakis's chances.

From the point when the story broke, it was just a question of whether Bush could keep up the pressure on his Democratic opponent. Hoping to make the liberal label stick, the vice president aggressively went after Dukakis for being soft on defense and crime. He gave a series of policy speeches beginning in August, vowing his support for the SDI and for a strong defense generally.

In his acceptance speech at the Republican convention, Bush castigated Dukakis for seeing a "long slow decline for our country, an inevitable fall mandated by impersonal historical forces," and counterposed his own vision of America "as a unique nation with a special role in the world." This has been called the American Century, Bush went on, "because we were the dominant force for good in the world. We saved Europe, cured polio, went to the Moon, and lit the world with our culture. And now we're on the verge of a new century, and what country's name will it bear. I say it will be another American Century."

An American Century?

Whether that turns out to be true, depends entirely on Bush's actions during the first 30-90 days of his presidency. Although James Baker III managed to stave off financial collapse during 1988 (the one eventuality which would have destroyed Bush's presidential ambitions), the looming economic crisis cannot be papered over much longer. The global food crisis, the U.S. savings and loans fiasco, the collapse of the industrial base, are just a few of the signs that "Black Monday" was just the tremor of a huge economic earthquake soon to come.

The same holds true for the international arena. Bush got a taste of the games Gorbachov intends to play, designed to advance Moscow's imperial ambitions, when the Soviet President came to the United Nations in December.

Bush cannot hope to get through the coming months by muddling along, making a few minor changes and applying a few band-aids here and there. He will either have to bow to the Wall Street boys—which means de facto bowing to Moscow—by accepting their program of savage domestic austerity, and devastating cutbacks in military spending and the defense commitment to American allies. Or he will fight for his vision of an American Century, which will mean adopting, at least in significant part, the economic and strategic policies advocated by LaRouche.